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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 17 July 2002 at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Buallay (Vice-President) ..... (Bahrain)

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In the absence of Mr. Šimonović (Croatia), Mr. Buallay (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/57/77-E/2002/63 and A/57/97-E/2002/76)

1. **Ms. Msechu** (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Over the past decade natural disasters had affected some 215 million people. She therefore welcomed the strengthening of the regional presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which would facilitate timely responses to humanitarian emergencies, although there was also a need to increase capacity in order to ensure a stronger response. In that connection, she trusted that the international community would respond appropriately to the famine currently ravishing the southern Africa subregion, so as to avoid more serious consequences. The strengthening of the OCHA regional presence must go hand in hand with capacity-building for governments and local populations, particularly in the areas of contingency planning and regional coordination.

2. In situations of armed conflict, one of the key challenges was to ensure that combatants were separated from civilians. It was, however, unrealistic in cases of large-scale flights of people to expect overwhelmed countries of asylum, particularly poor developing countries, to distinguish between bona fide asylum-seekers and armed combatants. The problem needed to be addressed by the entire international community, with the United Nations providing the necessary leadership. The time had come for the Organization to draw up a comprehensive framework for assistance and support to countries of asylum. In that connection, she paid tribute to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the technical assistance provided to her Government.

3. She noted with satisfaction the recommendation made in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63) that the views of women should be sought on all issues relevant to humanitarian crises and commended the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for continuing to mainstream gender into the humanitarian response to emergencies. There was also a need to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, as managers, designers and planners of humanitarian strategies.

4. Most countries in the southern Africa subregion were reeling from the effects of one natural disaster after another. That situation demanded more focused attention and enhanced resource flows. The United Nations, for its part, must pursue its efforts to respond to humanitarian crises. Success in that area depended on coordinated action and timely and effective interventions guided by the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality.

5. **Mr. Manis** (Sudan) associated his delegation with the statement by the observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Because of his country's experience and its cooperation with the United Nations and the international community through Operation Lifeline Sudan, he attached particular importance to the humanitarian affairs segment of the Council's work. It was important to bear in mind that humanitarian assistance should only be provided at the request of the State concerned and with its agreement, and on a basis of impartiality and neutrality which fully respected that State's sovereignty, its laws and its territorial integrity.

6. The consolidated appeals process had proved its effectiveness as a mechanism for planning and coordinating humanitarian assistance. However, the recent fall in the level of response to the appeals for such assistance, which in some cases had been as low as 10 per cent of estimated requirements, had become a matter of concern. Unless that shortfall could be remedied, the future of humanitarian action by the United Nations system might be jeopardized.

7. Experience had shown that a large part of the scarce resources available for humanitarian assistance was taken up by transport costs, in particular air transport. His delegation felt that alternatives such as transport overland and by river and rail should be considered, since they were not only cheaper but tended to be more efficient, particularly for bulk consignments. It was also desirable, as far as possible, to purchase food and other supplies locally, either in the State concerned or in a neighbouring State.

8. The problem of internally displaced persons which had recently become more acute as a result of the growing number of conflicts and natural disasters was primarily one problem for individual governments to deal with. In the Sudan, for example, the State had devised rules on the basis of the values of hospitality that were characteristic of the Sudanese community and had successfully integrated displaced persons into the local communities and involved them in decision-making. Other countries had also sought appropriate means of addressing the problem. He called in that connection for an exchange of experiences, so that member States might draw up a list of points of disagreement with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, with a view to reflecting any necessary changes in the final text.

9. Since national authorities and local groups addressed the consequences of the 80 per cent or more of natural disasters which did not come to the notice of the international community, his delegation welcomed the appeal in the Secretary-General's report for capacity-building at the local, national, subregional and regional levels. Some disasters followed a recurring pattern. For example, when a particular region suffered from drought, emergency assistance was mobilized until the climatic conditions improved, but, when the drought returned a few years later, emergency assistance was again provided. In order to break that vicious cycle it might be appropriate for the United Nations and the international community to study radical solutions to ensure sustainable means of subsistence for local people that might make them less vulnerable to such cycles of drought and to other natural disasters.

10. The Secretary-General's report drew attention to the importance of objective and neutral information in conflict prevention. In that connection, he noted that the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) was due to expand its broadcasting activities and that his Government had repeatedly called on IRIN, to no avail, to reconsider its methods of work because they were characterized by a resort to provocation.

11. The worst human disaster of recent years was taking place in occupied Palestine, perhaps the most serious feature of which was that emergency humanitarian assistance was prevented from reaching the refugee camps. Crimes had also been committed in the camps in Jenin and elsewhere in Palestine which his delegation had expected to see mentioned in the report. However, while the problems encountered in providing emergency assistance in other parts of the world were discussed, nothing was said of the plight of the Palestinian people.

12. **Mr. Martins** (Angola) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted with satisfaction that the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63) highlighted the efforts of his Government to incorporate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in its legislation and policy. His Government was committed to applying sound internationally accepted principles in dealing with humanitarian crises.

13. The international response to humanitarian emergencies, whether caused by natural disasters or man-made, should be commensurate with their scale, impact and duration. Regrettably, in the case of long-running conflicts, donor fatigue often set in. He appealed to the international community to respond with equal vigour to the forgotten crises in the world, particularly those in Africa.

14. More than 5 million people were affected by the current humanitarian emergency in Angola. Earlier in the year, OCHA had launched the consolidated appeal for Angola to fund 130 projects in 13 sectors. While his delegation was grateful to all Member States that had responded positively to the appeal, thus far OCHA had received only 34 per cent of the total amount requested. Angola currently had a unique and unprecedented opportunity to consolidate peace. The resources requested not only would alleviate the plight of millions of Angolans but would also contribute to the process of national reconciliation. It was thus crucial for Member States to respond adequately. His Government had stepped up its own role in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Over the past two years, it had progressively increased the level of resources allocated to the social sector, including for emergency assistance. That increase had been made possible through enhanced cooperation with the international donor community.

15. **Mr. Kiniger-Passigli** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the mission of ILO was to promote opportunities for men and women everywhere to obtain decent and productive work in

conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. Through its Infocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (IFP/CRISIS), established in 1999, ILO promoted employment-friendly reconstruction and helped to save existing jobs and create new ones. In so doing, it had built a body of knowledge on crisis response, preparedness and prevention.

16. Over the past three years, IFP/CRISIS had been at the forefront of crisis response and reconstruction activities worldwide. As a result of the cooperation between ILO and other partners, the employment dimension had been mainstreamed into reconstruction programmes in those areas. Unfortunately, such programmes had not always secured donor funding. Clearly more needed to be done to ensure the timely provision of resources for transitional and development activities. In particular, major emphasis should be placed on bringing employment concerns to the forefront of the disaster and crisis management cycle.

17. The persistent marginalization of employment issues in relation to crises was evident in the coordination arrangements among operational agencies. While ILO was now fully represented in the United Nations Development Group, it was not part of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs or the Executive Committee on Peace and Security. Nor did it participate in the work of IASC, even though it was vital that an organization which was a major partner in emergency and development programmes around the world should be fully represented in that primary policy coordination mechanism.

18. Recent experience had shown the great potential of cooperation between ILO and other partners in the field. In that connection, it was important for the Organization to be an active participant in United Nations disaster management teams, to take part in joint needs assessment and planning missions and to be fully integrated in the preparation and maintenance of contingency plans.

19. In post-crisis environments, the situation was more positive. ILO was contributing fully to the United Nations structures established in Afghanistan, East Timor and Kosovo. It was also a full-fledged participant in the country-level process of inter-agency strategic coordination and resource mobilization. It took part in the development of common humanitarian action plans, and it had appealed through the consolidated appeals process for over $22 million in 2002.

20. The challenge of assisting millions of dispossessed people worldwide could not be met exclusively through traditional humanitarian assistance. A major element of the crisis response promoted by ILO was the socio-economic integration of crisis-affected people through the formulation and implementation of programmes that promoted job creation and income generation. ILO was working in partnership with United Nations agencies and international institutions to affirm the centrality of employment in crisis response and to integrate employment concerns in their work.

21. **Mr. Waki** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the UNFPA Humanitarian Response Unit was now fully operational. The Unit would contribute to increased coordination and effectiveness and to meeting the special reproductive health needs of two vulnerable groups, women and adolescents, who continued to be underserved. As an active member of IASC, UNFPA remained committed to strengthening the consolidated appeals process and fully supported the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63).

22. Over the past year, UNFPA had been very active in the humanitarian field in cooperation with a wide range of partners, including other United Nations agencies, Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It had strengthened its cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with a view to providing reproductive health care for refugees and internally displaced persons and reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Fund knew very well that the gap between emergency relief and long-term development must be closed and that building local capacity was the key. In East Timor, for example, it was building on past emergency efforts to ensure that quality reproductive health services were available to the citizens of the newly independent nation.

23. There had been a strong united response from the United Nations system to the conflict in Afghanistan and the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. In Afghanistan, UNFPA was collaborating closely with

the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Public Health to improve maternal and child health facilities, train health workers and equip maternity hospitals. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, emergency obstetric care was inaccessible to most women in labour, and delays at checkpoints had resulted in unattended roadside births and even the deaths of some women and infants. Therefore, UNFPA had called for access to medical care and had trained midwives, distributed clean delivery kits and established a telephone hotline to assist with home deliveries.

24. The Great Lakes region remained a priority area for UNFPA humanitarian efforts. In the war-ridden Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence was widespread and was being used as a weapon of war, while pregnancy and delivery complications were among the leading causes of death for displaced women and girls. UNFPA had provided relief by rehabilitating maternity hospitals, training health workers and setting up youth centres. In West Africa, the Fund was working with the United Nations Development Fund for Women and other partners to promote increased involvement of women in peacemaking and peace-building.

25. The global HIV/AIDS pandemic continued to spread. Sadly, young people were most at risk, especially girls. Stronger efforts were needed to prevent HIV infection in conflict situations if international development goals were to be met. Greater commitment and increased funding were absolutely essential. United Nations peacekeepers were on the front lines of HIV prevention. UNFPA was working actively with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other partners to train peacekeeping personnel on HIV prevention and gender awareness. Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention were crucial issues during crisis situations. UNFPA was prepared to do its part in a coordinated effort with other humanitarian partners with a view to protecting and saving lives and restoring human dignity.

26. **Mr. Mugaas** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)), said that the twin themes of "reaching the most vulnerable" and "the transition from relief to development" were vital to IFRC in the context of coordination of humanitarian assistance.

27. The nature of crises was changing, and humanitarian interventions were often risky. Finding ways to gain access to isolated and vulnerable people was not easy. IFRC believed that the best way to cope with that problem was to prepare for such eventualities before emergencies arose. It was building the capacity of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in disaster-prone areas with a view to strengthening their ability to recruit, train and manage volunteers and employees and help local communities improve their self-reliance. It had become aware of the limitations of such an approach, however: treating disasters as individual and isolated events did not take account of the need for comprehensive pre-disaster action in the form of preparedness, prevention and risk reduction. If such action was taken, the victims would be in a better position to return to normal life soon after a disaster.

28. IFRC placed great value on coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. It played an active role in IASC and was establishing specific agreements with a series of bodies and agencies. In the interests of improving operational responses and planning and coordination tools, IFRC had launched a study, the International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) project, whose task was not to create a new body of law, but to collect and analyse the legislation that already existed in that area. All too often, the provision of relief supplies in the aftermath of disaster was hampered by bureaucratic procedures, problems of physical access or lack of access to funds and telecommunications facilities. Although international humanitarian law was well established and codified, the same was not true of rules governing the response to natural disasters. The IDRL project aimed to foster greater awareness of such rules, to fill any gaps found, and to put together a body of legislation to form a framework for disaster response. The project's outcome would be presented to the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in December 2003, and because every single life saved was important, it was hoped that States and the Red Cross and Red Crescent family would support further work in that area.

29. **Mr. Paiva** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that IOM valued its participation in the consolidated appeals process, which was not only a resource mobilization tool, but also an instrument for strategic planning and programming. It was therefore puzzled by the often inadequate response to the appeals. However, it

remained committed to the exercise and welcomed the recent independent review.

30. He noted with satisfaction the establishment within OCHA of the Unit on Internal Displacement. The Unit was an important inter-agency effort which merited the strong support of the international community, and he trusted that the Council would endorse the recommendation to that effect in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63). IOM, for its part, had seconded an experienced staff member to the Unit.

31. Humanitarian emergencies were becoming more complex, with conflict increasingly being compounded by natural disaster. One such complex emergency was the situation in Afghanistan. Over the past year, IOM, at the request of OCHA, had taken over the management of camps for internally displaced persons in that country. Regrettably, funding difficulties had forced it to suspend temporarily several of its activities, demonstrating that more needed to be done to ensure that basic humanitarian relief needs continued to be met in situations of transition.

32. IOM had responded to recent allegations of sexual abuse committed by humanitarian workers in West Africa by strengthening its code of conduct so that it addressed more forcefully the specific issue of sexual abuse and the abuse of power that it represented. It was also discussing with its IASC partners additional measures to prevent the recurrence of such abuse in the future.

33. IOM remained committed to working with OCHA and its IASC partners to achieve better coordinated, more proactive and increasingly effective responses to humanitarian emergencies, responses that drew on the lessons learned over the past decade. It attached great importance to its participation in IASC and supported the ongoing efforts, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, to streamline IASC further in order to keep it focused and effective.

34. **Mr. Hamad** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), said that the Dakar Framework for Action adopted by the World Education Forum held in April 2000 had committed its participants to meeting the needs of education systems affected by conflict and natural disasters and to using education to promote peace and tolerance and prevent violence and conflict. Education was an aspect of humanitarian action which was often overshadowed by the most immediate assistance needs, chiefly food, shelter and medicine. While UNESCO fully appreciated the necessary sequence of humanitarian aid, it took the view that, without educational support, the humanitarian assistance provided for the victims of natural and man-made disasters would not have a lasting effect. Graça Machel's 1996 report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children had concluded that educational support, and the stability and routine it provided, was a key part of children's emotional and psycho-social well-being. It encouraged donors to support education as part of humanitarian assistance, and it recommended specialized training for teachers working in situations of conflict.

35. Education was included in United Nations inter-agency consolidated appeals, but despite being recognized as part of the relief-to-development continuum, especially in protracted conflicts, it was not given sufficient consideration by donors. Regular meetings of donors were advisable, to consider trends in humanitarian response and ensure that imbalances in funding between various sectors of assistance were addressed. UNESCO firmly believed that its specific mandate within the United Nations system gave it a responsibility to assist those affected by conflict or disaster.

36. **Mr. Kastberg** (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the nature and magnitude of conflicts had changed, as most recent humanitarian crises had been internal conflicts triggered by human-rights violations and political disenfranchisement. A hallmark of such situations had been violations of the rights of children, who were frequent victims of violence, landmines, malnutrition and disease and often became deliberate targets and weapons in times of war. As international attention increasingly focused on the protection of civilians, however, legal obligations and political commitments had begun to provide a framework for protecting children in armed conflicts.

37. Those legal obligations, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child, guided UNICEF in its work to meet the survival, protection and development needs of children affected by conflict and natural disasters. Protection was an essential component of such action, and one facet of protection was providing health and education services. In

situations of conflict and disaster, education was a way to restore stability and security to children's lives. Protection also depended on access, something which OCHA had been able to secure by negotiation in a number of cases. Translating the commitment to protection into action required collaboration and cooperation within countries and internationally.

38. Ten years had passed since the General Assembly had adopted resolution 46/182 to provide a framework for humanitarian assistance, establishing four core mechanisms for coordination: the Emergency Relief Coordinator, IASC, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the Consolidated Appeals Process. From the point of view of UNICEF, the advantage of those coordination mechanisms was that children's issues had been placed on the agenda of the wider humanitarian community. UNICEF could not handle all such issues by itself, and children had to be seen as the concern of everyone.

39. The General Assembly's Special Session on Children had been the culmination of a ten-year effort to focus attention on children. The challenge was to harness the momentum of the Special Session to protect and assist children in humanitarian crises, in order to build what in the words of the outcome document was a world fit for them.

40. **Mr. Enkhsaikhan** (Observer for Mongolia) endorsed the statement made earlier by the observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He urged that the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/77-E/2002/63), which should be reflected in the draft resolution under preparation, should serve as guidance for future humanitarian activities.

41. The numerous humanitarian emergencies of the past ten years had placed a particular strain on the capacities and resources of the poorest developing countries. The situation called for the adoption of a broader regional approach to humanitarian aid and the strengthening of regional infrastructure. Moreover, capacity-building in preventing and coping with disasters at the local and national levels was of critical importance.

42. His Government fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that a broad "culture of protection" should be established, involving action in such areas as promotion of access, justice and reconciliation (A/55/77-E/2002/63, para. 30). While it agreed that the primary responsibility for protecting civilians lay with States themselves, international assistance was important, and it welcomed the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement within OCHA, especially since the number of internally displaced persons was rising.

43. Mongolia's recent experience of natural disasters led it to conclude that strengthening the consolidated appeals process would usefully contribute to mobilizing and coordinating assistance. It hoped that it would prove possible to reverse the decline in funding observed.

44. The much-discussed transition from relief to development would require a special effort in the field of education, as education was an important element in disaster prevention as well as in coping with the consequences of emergencies. The Secretary-General's recommendations should be expanded to emphasize that issue.

45. Mongolia had experienced two successive disastrous winters, affecting the economically vital livestock industry in particular. It was grateful to the United Nations and other donors for the assistance it had been given, and for the positive response to the 2001 joint appeal by the United Nations and the Government of Mongolia.

46. **Mr. Djerad** (Observer for Algeria) welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance (A/55/77-E/2002/63) and endorsed the statement by the observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The recent increase in complex humanitarian emergencies caused by armed conflict or natural disasters had made the issue of humanitarian response a complicated one. Despite the reform of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations and the improvement in coordination in that area, conflicts of interest, power play and selectiveness still threatened the principles of neutrality, universality, humanity and impartiality, especially in complex emergencies. It was important to remember that General Assembly resolution 46/182 provided the framework for international humanitarian assistance, and its principles should be respected.

47. Particularly in Africa, the seriousness of the situations which had developed made it essential to focus on the internal and external root causes of humanitarian emergencies rather than on such vague

concepts as a "culture of protection", the meaning of which needed clarification. Humanitarian assistance was above all a duty of solidarity.

48. The Secretary-General's report referred to the constant need to mobilize funds for humanitarian assistance, and it was a matter of concern that contributions were in decline. The shortage of resources threatened to paralyse the humanitarian activities of the United Nations and nullify the effect of the coordination arrangements that had been made. The consolidated appeals process remained the best method of mobilizing funding, and the United Nations needed to broaden the donor base while scrupulously ensuring that humanitarian concerns remained uppermost and no conditions or pressure were attached to the assistance. As to the development of a global humanitarian financial tracking system called for in paragraph 84 (x) of the Secretary-General's report (A/57/77-E/2002/63), his delegation had doubts over the scale and usefulness of such a system.

49. Against a background of increasingly frequent emergencies, humanitarian assistance contributions should not be made at the expense of reduced development aid. The arrangements for coordination of emergency assistance should stress involvement in capacity-building in the countries affected by disasters. The transition from relief to development was a vital but delicate and complex process which required constant coordination between the United Nations and other donors and the authorities of the country concerned. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the proposed establishment of an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict.

50. In closing, he said that humanitarian assistance remained an issue that required further analysis and discussion both in the Council and in the General Assembly.

51. **Mr. Rivas** (Observer for Colombia) expressed support for the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that the principles enshrined in General Assembly resolution 46/182, particularly neutrality, impartiality and the primary role of affected States must form the basis for all humanitarian assistance.

52. Both the report and the resolution adopted by the Council should highlight the importance of the transition from relief to development and of the active involvement of affected communities in that transition. Community participation and the strengthening of both local structures and the national institutional framework were often the best guarantee that assistance would reach the affected communities in a timely and efficient manner. He stressed the fundamental importance of coordination at all levels, particularly among the agencies of the United Nations system, in order to avoid duplication. The consolidated appeals process would be an effective tool to that end, particularly since it was elaborated in consultation with affected States.

53. Colombia was committed to human rights and the norms of international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians, including the most vulnerable groups. Highlighting women's positive role in the peace and reconstruction processes, he stressed the need for continued mainstreaming of a gender perspective in humanitarian responses. He also called for the implementation of the commitments to provide humanitarian assistance to children and the elderly, undertaken at the two recent global conferences on those groups. His delegation strongly supported the initiative to elaborate a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

54. Colombia attached great importance to the issue of internal displacement, on which it maintained an open and transparent position. Its national policy on internal displacement promoted respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and the United Nations Guiding Principles and stressed prevention, humanitarian assistance, socio-economic rehabilitation, protection and institutional capacity-building. His Government had appealed to the international community for support in dealing with displaced communities in its national territory and was grateful to the World Food Programme (WFP), UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for their assistance. In conclusion, his delegation, too, was concerned at the complaints of sexual abuse, exploitation and misappropriation of funds by humanitarian personnel and called for appropriate measures to be taken.

55. **Mr. Ibrahim** (Nigeria) said that his delegation supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Africa continued to be ravaged by a series of natural and complex humanitarian emergencies, ranging from drought, floods, and

earthquakes to armed conflict, all of which were compounded by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. While not all disasters could be prevented, improved contingency planning and preparedness would help to reduce their impact when they occurred. In that connection, he commended the work of the Inter-Agency Reference Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning and of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group. The coordinated response to environmental emergencies being developed by OCHA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was also encouraging.

56. Since the beginning of the year, Nigeria had experienced several disasters, including the Lagos bomb explosion, the Kano plane crash and communal clashes in two states, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands of displaced persons. In every case, the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency had played the primary role in relief distribution and rehabilitation, but it had had to call on friendly countries to help in the disposal of unexploded bombs and ammunition after the Lagos incident. It was grateful to those countries and to United Nations agencies, IFRC and numerous international and local non-governmental organizations for their assistance.

57. Internal displacement in Nigeria was not one of the "forgotten crises" referred to in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening and coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63, para. 47); on the contrary, his Government was doing its utmost to help the affected persons. If the newly created Unit on Internal Displacement was to provide meaningful assistance to Nigeria, however, time was of the essence. While the coordinated efforts of United Nations agencies, NGOs, donors and ICRC had offered some degree of relief to the vulnerable in Africa, much remained to be done, particularly in the transition from relief to development. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, for example, jobless demobilized combatants roaming the streets might well indulge in criminal activities out of frustration and endanger the fragile peace. Top priority should be given to planning and implementing development projects, particularly the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

58. The Organization's efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance, particularly in Africa, could be enhanced through greater support for regional conflict prevention and resolution initiatives. Stressing the need to address the root causes of conflicts, including corruption, bad governance and poverty, he urged the United Nations, its agencies, donors and other stakeholders to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In conclusion, he requested OCHA to intensify its capacity-building programme in the areas of rescue and search, logistics support and contingency planning, particularly with a view to enabling developing countries to respond to emergencies and disasters in the critical first 24 hours before the international community intervened.

59. **Mr. Pradhan** (Bhutan) recalled that the observer for Venezuela, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, had emphasized that in providing humanitarian assistance the international community must abide by the guiding principles of General Assembly resolution 46/182 and must respect the principles of impartiality, neutrality and humanity. His delegation was concerned at the steady decline in the proportion of humanitarian assistance being channelled through the consolidated appeals process and hoped that that trend would be reversed as soon as possible.

60. Bhutan was located in one of the most geologically fragile mountain environments in the world, a region prone to earthquakes, heavy soil erosion, glacial lake outbursts and floods. Almost every year, monsoon rains led to floods and landslides causing heavy damage to infrastructure, disruption of communications and shortages of food and other supplies. Floods and soil erosion also affected large areas of India and Bangladesh, where one of the main causes of natural calamities was large-scale deforestation and unsustainable land use, particularly in mountainous areas. His Government had adopted a land use policy that reduced both flooding and soil erosion, preserving forest cover which stood at about 72 per cent of the total land area. That reduced the impact of natural disasters in both Bhutan and neighbouring countries, and Bhutan would maintain that environmental approach in the future.

61. In closing, he said that many natural disasters could be prevented or their impact reduced through the adoption of long-term measures to halt environmental deterioration and global warming.

62. **Ms. Ndhlovu** (South Africa) said that currently more than 12 million people in southern Africa faced starvation owing to a severe drought which was in its

third consecutive year, and any recurrence of the El Niño phenomenon would probably aggravate that situation. She appealed to Member States to answer to the fullest extent possible the consolidated national appeals for southern Africa, to be launched in the coming days and the emergency appeals of WFP.

63. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of OCHA to strengthen its regional activities, including in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It also commended the regional approach adopted by the entire United Nations system and the broader humanitarian community. Discussions of country assessment missions carried out by OCHA, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the most seriously affected SADC countries, held during a June meeting of IASC, had proved to be extremely valuable. Her delegation welcomed the efforts to develop guidelines to expedite the work of international search and rescue teams through the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and hoped they would be adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. Rescue South Africa, an association of voluntary urban search and rescue experts, was working with the Advisory Group to host a meeting of international search and rescue experts in South Africa later in the year.

64. Her delegation hailed the Secretary-General's call for a "culture of protection". While primary responsibility for protection rested with the affected Member States, the broader international community must provide all reasonable political and humanitarian support. She referred, in particular, to the Secretary-General's appeal that the humanitarian needs of the vulnerable should be delinked from the larger political debates surrounding a certain country or region. That was particularly true of the humanitarian crisis in southern Africa. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement and the incorporation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into the legislation of a growing number of African countries. Addressing the fundamental socio-economic needs of human beings through international cooperation would remove one of the root causes of armed conflict. The aims and objectives of NEPAD should be incorporated into humanitarian assistance with a view to reducing poverty and promoting the self-reliance and stability of the affected populations. The Africa Action Plan, adopted by the Group of Eight in support of NEPAD, would be of major importance in assisting vulnerable populations in humanitarian crises.

65. **Ms. Cruz** (El Salvador) expressed support for the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The earthquakes in El Salvador had been yet another instance of the developing countries' heightened vulnerability to natural disaster. Indications that the country could expect another cycle of the El Niño phenomenon highlighted the need for preparedness, capacity-building and contingency planning. Her delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's statement in his report that humanitarian action meant not only responding to crises and disasters but also being prepared to cope with them. In that connection, the Inter-Agency Reference Group on Preparedness and Contingency Planning should include disaster prevention and mitigation, preparedness and response planning in its regional planning systems. While the conceptual framework for a coordinated and integral approach was promising, new effective mechanisms to that end must be further discussed and analysed. Her delegation welcomed the regional seminars and workshops organized with a view to improving coordination and communication between governments and the United Nations humanitarian assistance system. It also called for enhanced coordination of the work of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams. Similarly, the members of IASC must work together more closely with a view to improving inter-agency planning in the United Nations system, thereby contributing to, inter alia, the efficient use of limited resources.

66. She stressed the importance of: guaranteed access to vulnerable populations, for which the affected State bore primary responsibility; the principles embodied in General Assembly resolution 46/182 as a basis for humanitarian assistance; and the Secretary-General's concept of a "culture of protection". The international community must mobilize additional resources for humanitarian assistance and address imbalances among sectors and the impact of reduced multilateral financing, which hampered implementation and coordination of programmes. Lastly, she said that the consolidated appeals process, a vital tool for coordination and strategic planning, must be more inclusive, giving all actors an opportunity to participate.

67. **Mr. Kulyk** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine, being prone to various natural hazards, had established cooperative arrangements with regional partners with a view to ensuring a timely, adequate and effective response to natural disasters. It was, for example, participating in a joint regional project with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on civil emergency planning and disaster preparedness and management and establishing mutual warning mechanisms with civil defence and emergency structures in neighbouring countries. His delegation agreed that access to vulnerable populations in humanitarian emergencies, particularly internally displaced persons, women, children and the elderly and disabled, was of paramount importance, and it supported the Secretary-General's call for the establishment of a "culture of protection". It took note of the findings of the independent review of the consolidated appeals process and supported the recommendations on strengthening and improving the process.

68. Sixteen years after the Chernobyl disaster, its impact continued to affect the lives of millions of people. Ukraine attached special importance to the role of the United Nations in strengthening international cooperation to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and appreciated the tireless efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl, as well as the activities of the OCHA and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl to that end. The new United Nations strategy on Chernobyl, "A Strategy for Recovery", which focused on the transition from relief to development, was a vital framework for optimizing assistance from the international community. His Government looked forward to the early implementation of the specific projects comprising the new strategy, which it would make every effort to facilitate. Increased donor involvement and support for the implementation of the Chernobyl project would be crucial. On 25 June, the Chernobyl web site, an international communications platform on the long-term consequences of the disaster, had been launched in Geneva, Kiev and Minsk. He expressed his delegation's sincere gratitude to the Government of Switzerland for designing and implementing the project.

69. **Mr. Francis** (Observer for Jamaica) said that the frequency, scope and severity of natural disasters had increased significantly over the past decade with devastating effects on millions of people, particularly in the developing world. Climate change had played a major role in growing environmental challenges which had undermined development, most especially in those countries having a limited capacity to respond effectively. Effective and integrated humanitarian responses to natural disasters and to the tragedies caused by armed conflicts were essential for the countries directly affected and for the international community in general. The regional repercussions of humanitarian crises clearly pointed to the urgent need for strengthened regional structures and to the importance of linking early-warning responses and preparedness capacities at the regional level. The United Nations should support regional organizations in order to strengthen their capacities to respond to humanitarian crises and natural disasters.

70. Projections showing that the world would face increasing numbers of climatically-related natural disasters were particularly significant for small island developing States, which were exceedingly vulnerable to such disasters. The resulting devastation represented a serious threat to sustainable development, given the limited response capacities and resource bases of those States. His delegation therefore welcomed the planning processes being undertaken by United Nations agencies in that area.

71. The ongoing large-scale humanitarian operations in conflict zones highlighted the changed environment in which humanitarian assistance was provided. Central to the role of the Organization was the need for crisis prevention and adoption of measures to address the root causes of crises before they developed. The ability of the humanitarian community to respond effectively to emergencies depended to a significant degree on the ability to reach vulnerable populations. The continued deliberate targeting of vulnerable groups in conflict areas pointed to an urgent need to promote respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. Every effort should be made to cooperate with other organs of the United Nations system to improve the environment for the safe and secure provision of humanitarian assistance by improving legal and physical protection for humanitarian personnel and calling on armed groups to respect the provisions of international law.

72. The transition from relief to development was particularly relevant in the case of humanitarian assistance. Urgent and concerted efforts were required to move as quickly as possible to a comprehensive humanitarian and development assistance programme so as to reduce future risks. His delegation stressed the importance of encouraging humanitarian strategies to identify and support engagement with local structures and institutions. It also favoured the continued use of the consolidated appeals process as a coordination, strategic planning and advocacy tool.

73. **Mr. Theron** (Observer for Namibia) said that the Secretary-General had rightly pointed out in his report that the southern African region was being affected by natural disasters for the third consecutive year. The situation had worsened owing to persistent drought and erratic rainfall and many population groups, especially in remote areas, suffered drought-related food insecurity. In an effort to ensure a high level of preparedness, his Government had created an emergency management unit to implement and coordinate operations with the aim of saving lives and reaching the most vulnerable. The unit was successfully coordinating relief programmes, such as "food for work" for able-bodied adults and free food distribution for vulnerable groups. Other government measures to respond to emergency needs included borehole drilling and financial assistance to farmers affected by the drought.

74. Although Namibia was faced with food shortages owing to erratic rainfall, it had always been ready to assist its neighbours and was hosting a number of refugees and providing other means of humanitarian assistance when possible. The combination of natural disasters, widespread hunger, chronic poverty, and the devastating effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the southern African region called for swift action from all relevant agencies and the donor community, and the effective coordination of funds. He called on Governments, donor countries, financial institutions and humanitarian agencies to recognize the importance of getting urgently needed assistance to the vulnerable in complex emergencies.

75. **Mr. Kazemi Kamyab** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation associated itself with the earlier statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He commended the report of the Secretary-General for the way in which it dealt with many aspects of emergency humanitarian assistance, including transition from relief to development. A new vision was needed to ensure that vulnerability was mitigated by helping to bridge the gap between those two activities. The development role of the United Nations system and the effectiveness of its development activities must be strengthened.

76. Capacity-building was a major component of all efforts to limit the negative effects of disasters. The United Nations system should play a very prominent role in that context. The magnitude and duration of many emergencies were such that international cooperation was indispensable in addressing such situations, but strong national capacity could lead to better coordination in the face of humanitarian emergencies. The need for adequate financial resources could scarcely be over-emphasized.

77. His delegation supported the efforts of OCHA to strengthen its regional presence in order to provide more effective assistance to disaster-prone countries and better coordinate and develop existing response mechanisms. It also welcomed efforts to expedite the work of international urban search and rescue operations.

78. The plight of refugees was a persisting phenomenon with global dimensions requiring an urgent global response. The situation of refugees and displaced persons could hardly find a more telling example than that of the oppressed Palestinian people. The international community must take a strong position against the policies of systematic destruction of Palestinian homes and the simultaneous expansion of settlements in the occupied territories. It was the occupation of Palestinian land, the root cause of the calamity affecting the Palestinian people, which should be addressed.

79. His Government was glad that the international community had committed itself to strengthening international cooperation, including burden-sharing and coordination of humanitarian assistance to countries hosting refugees. Providing assistance to internally displaced persons was not a core function of United Nations offices and agencies and should await the finalization of a legal document defining such persons and the mandate of the relevant United Nations institutions.

80. Lastly, his delegation commended the leading role played by the United Nations and its humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, working towards the goal of

reconstruction and ultimately of development of that war-torn country.

81. **Ms. Mahouve Same** (Cameroon) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It welcomed the detailed recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. The complex, multidimensional nature of current humanitarian situations had led many actors, including Governments and non-governmental organizations, to work in close collaboration. Over the past decade, conflicts and natural and environmental disasters had increased in frequency and intensity, leading to massive population displacements, innumerable acts of violence, considerable loss of human life and widespread destruction of socio-economic infrastructure. In order to lessen the impact of humanitarian crises, it was necessary to prevent armed conflicts by dealing with their underlying causes and establishing a culture of peace. Peace-building measures must be promoted in post-conflict periods, and early-warning systems were needed to alleviate the impact of natural and environmental disasters.

82. Most victims of crises and disasters lived in the developing countries, where demographic pressure and poverty often led the population to put themselves at risk from natural hazards. Africa had for many years been affected by numerous conflicts, which undermined its development. The AIDS epidemic had made the situation even worse. A more effective prevention strategy could save thousands of lives and considerable economic resources. Strong emphasis should be placed on regional crisis management capacities. Cameroon, for its part, had set up an inter-ministerial committee for the prevention of natural disasters and the protection of the affected population groups. The determination of African States to mobilize for peace and security must be matched by material and logistical support provided by increased international assistance. Few developing countries had the means to cope unaided with the humanitarian consequences of crises.

83. It was clear from the increasing numbers of civilians killed and the frequency and seriousness of attacks on humanitarian workers that the provisions of international law relating to human rights, refugees and humanitarian situations continued to be held in contempt. Accordingly, her delegation supported the principle of developing clearly defined procedures to identify and separate armed elements in situations of massive population displacement. It commended the rules established by the United Nations concerning protection and distribution mechanisms and protection against sexual abuse and exploitation and the misuse of humanitarian assistance.

84. The consolidated appeals process should lead to improved consultations among donors in their financing decisions. Her delegation supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General concerning the establishment of a global humanitarian financial tracking system.

85. **Mr. Percaya** (Observer for Indonesia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the Observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His Government believed that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, with the consent of the affected country and with respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national humanity of States as recognized in General Assembly resolution 46/182. In addition, the affected State should play the primary role in coordinating humanitarian relief efforts. His Government urged the Council to support recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, which advocated strengthening the consolidated appeals process and regional relief efforts, smoothing the transition from relief to development and protecting the most vulnerable.

86. The system for providing humanitarian assistance worldwide was under increasing stress, which exacerbated the inequality among crises. More must be done to ensure adequate resources for humanitarian assistance, but not by diverting funds from other goals such as sustainable development. It was important to strengthen the consolidated appeals process, reduce bilateralism, and strengthen regional cooperation and regional responses to crises. Once again, his Government urged the developed countries to live up to their commitments on official development assistance.

87. On the issue of transition from relief to development, donor funds dried up when a relief effort had ended because donors' rules for providing relief made no provision for promoting development. As a result, the people left behind were very vulnerable to the next crisis. That was where NGOs could have a substantial impact, since it was easy for them to be flexible in their rules about aid. As for the issue of

relief to the most vulnerable, his delegation reiterated the principle that the delivery of assistance should not compromise the sovereignty of the recipient country. In many instances, however, it was difficult for the recipient country to fully guarantee the safety of aid workers and the delivery of aid. In such circumstances the international community should work closely with Governments. His Government was also firmly convinced that internally displaced persons were an internal matter for each country and that international humanitarian assistance for such persons should therefore be delivered with the consent and cooperation of the affected country.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.